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ABSTRACT

This learning module, which is part of a three-block series intended to help human service workers develop the skills necessary to solve the problems encountered in their daily contact with elderly clients of different cultural backgrounds, deals with German culture. The first section provides background information about the German migrations to Canada and the German heritage. The module's general objectives are described next. The remaining sections deal with German settlements in Manitoba, the bond between those who are able to understand and speak the German language, the role of religion and its importance in the lives of German-speaking Canadians, the value of family ties to German-speaking Canadians, customs common to German Canadians, and the relationship between the German-Canadian family and the neighborhood/community. A list of selected readings and descriptions of two pertinent films are appended. (MN)

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BLOCK B
Cultural Gerontology

MODULE B.2
German Culture

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GERMAN CULTURE

MODULE B.2

The Elderly Service Workers' Training Project wishes to express appreciation of the following individuals who have contributed to the development of the "GERMAN CULTURE" module.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ____ P.1

GENERAL OBJECTIVES ____ P.2

GERMAN SETTLEMENTS IN MANITOBA ____ P.3

LANGUAGE ____ P.17

RELIGION ____ P.19

FAMILY ____ P.21

CUSTOMS ____ P.23

COMMUNITY COHESIVENESS ____ P.27

SUMMARY ____ P.29

APPENDIX ____ P.30

- SELECTED READINGS ____ P.31
- ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ____ P.33

INTRODUCTION

German-speaking Canadians come from a mosaic of backgrounds. The first section of this module tells us about their migrations to Canada. Because they come from many countries and regions of the world, they are familiar with different languages and dialects.

Understanding and speaking the German language is one of their strongest bonds. Family, religion, and customs play an important part in their lives as well, and similar cultural traditions can be recognized as part of a German Heritage.

1) What qualities distinguish them?
2) What do they prize and value?
3) What is important to them in their day to day living?
4) What is their approach to old age?

Answers to these questions and others will help to develop quicker and better relationships with older adults from this background. This module will introduce you to a cross section of German-speaking Canadians.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this module you will be able to:

(1) describe the historical past and subsequent immigration of Germans to Canada.
(2) understand the bond between those who are able to understand and speak the German language.
(3) describe the role of religion and its importance in the lives of the German-speaking Canadian.
(4) describe the value of family ties to the German-speaking Canadian.
(5) describe many of the customs of German-speaking Canadians.
(6) describe a German-Canadian family's relationship to their neighbourhood and community.

The following section will present the history of German immigrants and their settlement in Canada.

GERMAN SETTLEMENTS IN MANITOBA

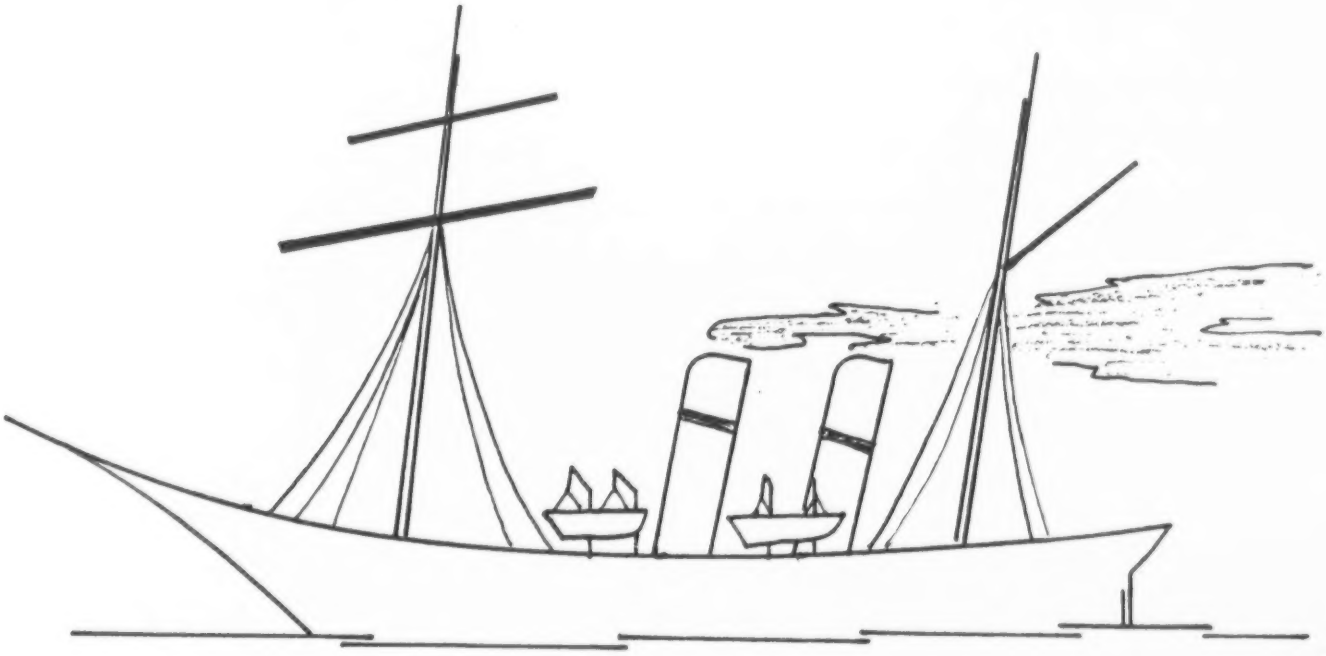
Upon completion of this section you will be able to describe the historical past and subsequent immigration of Germans to Canada.

The first German-speaking immigrants to arrive in Manitoba were German-Swiss mercenaries, members of two regiments of soldiers who were disbanded after the 1812-1815 war between Canada and the United States. The regiments were named after their generals, de Meurons and Von Wattenwil. Lord Selkirk had retained 100 officers and men of the regiments for protection of his Red River settlement from skirmishes between the Hudson Bay and North Western companies in tiny Fort Garry. They came from Montreal, and planned to homestead on the lands offered to them by the British Government. After tremendous hardships in their travels across the Great Lakes, they arrived in Manitoba in June 1817. The land grants they received lay in the proximity of the fort, and they built their homes on the Seine River, which at that time was called "German Creek." In answer to a request by the German-Swiss settlers, two Roman Catholic priests, one of them Bishop Provencher, named the

settlement on the Seine "St. Boniface" after the German saint. One of the streets in St. Boniface still bears the name "de Meurons." Essentially the settlers were army men, not farmers, and when their services were no longer required after the amalgamation of the feuding companies, they found their position untenable. After the settlement experienced the flood of 1826, they together with a later group of German-Swiss immigrants who had joined the colony, abandoned Red River for settlements in St. Paul, Minnesotta, where they became cattle-ranchers.

Early Immigration from Germany

Early 19th century emigration from Germany to British North America was sporadic and insignificant.



Direct immigration from Germany began after 1846. During the 1840s massive poverty in south-western Germany reached an unprecedented scale. In this area, agriculture and wine growing were the mainstay of its economy, but the continued divisions and subdivisions of land necessitated by the rapid population growth resulted in insufficient means of subsistence. The government recognized emigration as a partial solution to the problems of the improverished regions. With the creation of the new "Zollverein", agents of major shipping lines searched for German emigrants to North America.

German Immigrants from Tsarist Russia

Between 1874 and 1880 William Hespeler, an immigration agent who later became the first German consul in Manitoba, brought 1,281 German-speaking families (approximately 6,674 persons) to Manitoba. Two thirds of these were from Tsarist Russia and Rumania, and twelve to fifteen per cent from Germany and Austria, while some settlers from the United States comprised the rest. Known for their skills, craftmanship, and proficiency in the sciences and architecture, Germans had been invited to Tsarist Russia to build the cities of Leningrad and Moscow, which subsequently attracted approximately 80,000 German residents. When Catherine II invited German farmers to take up land grants in Tsarist Russia, settlements sprang up in the Volga areas, Bessarabia, the Caucasus, the Baltic States and

Volhynia. The settlers in these regions were given freedom of religion, their own administration of the settlements, and exemption from military service "for all time." In 1871 these privileges were rescinded, and large German migrations to Siberia, Canada, the United States and South America took place. Large numbers reached Manitoba between 1890 and 1910 and settled in the Rosenfeld, Morris and Brunkild areas. About 1895 Germans from Volhynia, Tsarist Russia, obtained homesteads and settled in the wilderness area of Plumas and Waldersee, and later near Amaranth, Manitoba. They had come from Zhitomir, New Romanovka, Rissovata, Heimtal, and Shadkovka (Volhynia), as well as from Warsaw, Sompolno, and Strelno, Poland. At first they worked as labourers but later started their own farm communities. All immigrants passed through Winnipeg which was a through-station for travelers.

The new settlers adjusted to the Canadian way of life quickly and began to organize their own cultural and spiritual life. By 1878 the first German Baptist Church had been founded, to be followed in 1888 by the Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Church, and by the St. Joseph's Catholic Church in 1906. In 1917 the first German Club was founded, and in 1892 the German Society of Winnipeg came into being. They carried on with their traditional "Gesangchore" or choirs, and were socially and culturally active.

German Immigration in the 1920s.

Conditions in Germany during the days of the Weimar Republic after World War I were conducive to immigration. Industrial workers as well as German landholders felt the material pressures of a defeated nation, as well as political depression. In Manitoba, and indeed in most of Canada, farmlands were still available, and living conditions at that time offered hope and promise. Leaving their homeland for economic reasons, some hundred persons from the Westphalia and the Black Forest region settled in Little Britain, north of Winnipeg. Today this community is well known in German circles for its interests in German cultural affairs. The depression struck them a hard blow in 1929, and during the 1930s there was little immigration from

Germany directly, although a large influx of Sudeten-Germans took place in that decade.

German Immigration after World War II

The second World War in 1941 saw the complete obliteration of the German settlements in the European part of the Soviet Union. Close to 50,000 persons were exiled into Central Asia, from the Volga districts, the Crimea, the Caucasus, and Leningrad, while all Germans east of the Dnieper were evacuated behind the Urals. The approximately 350,000 still left in their villages between Dnieper and Dniester, two major rivers of the Ukrainian S.S.R., were sent into the Warthegau and tranferred into Germany under extreme hardships and at great loss of life. However, 250,000 of their numbers were returned to the Soviet Union and sentenced to ten to fifteen years in penal labour camps in the northern wilds. The separation of family members and the transfer of residents to unfamiliar regions created drastic upheavals in the German society - a situation which has remained a burning issue to this day.

At the end of the war great changes had taken place in Germany. Boundaries had been shifted and regions redistributed. The German population of Eastern Europe made desperate attempts to resettle in Western Europe, while many inhabitants of Central Europe and Western Germany had been bombed out of their homes. Again the

desperate economic and political conditions of the members of a defeated nation led to an escalated immigration programme. Many Germans emigrated to Canada, and in 1981 the German population of Manitoba numbered 140,000.

German-Canadians have won the respect of fellow Canadians through their diligence, thrift and enterprise. Their contributions to literature, art and music are recognized throughout the province, as are their successful economic and business ventures.

The Origin Of The Mennonites

The first German-speaking people from Tsarist Russia to move to Manitoba were the Mennonites. Originally the Mennonites belonged to the radical wing of Swiss reformers for whom Martin Luther's reforms did not go far enough. Some of their basic tenets were: 1. Personal redemption by salvation 2. Adult baptism 3. Communion was seen as a commemoration of God's sacrifice (bread and wine are symbolic) 4. Rejection of militarism (Mennonites do not bear arms) 5. Rejection of the oath ("yes" and "no" suffice) 6. Freedom of individual conscience 7. Toleration of others 8. Church is separate from state 9. Assets or possessions must be shared with the needy.

Persecution of these believers caused them to

flee their homeland and seek asylum in the Netherlands, where many Dutch converts became adherents of their faith. Menno Simons (1496-1561), a Roman Catholic priest, was baptized into the new church, and became its leader in 1536. The members of his group came to be known as "Mennonites," a name they have retained to this day.

Sojourn in Prussia

Intense persecution caused the Mennonites to flee the Netherlands. They found sanctuary in the marshlands near the Free City of Danzig in Prussia. The refugees, largely agrarian, became prosperous after they drained the marshy region at tremendous sacrifice of strengh and labour. They retained many Dutch traditions and generally used the Dutch language in their homes and communities.

After several generations the Dutch language was slowly replaced by German. When the region came under Prussian rule, land expansion and exemption from military service was denied them - a most serious issue for the populous Mennonites who had large families.

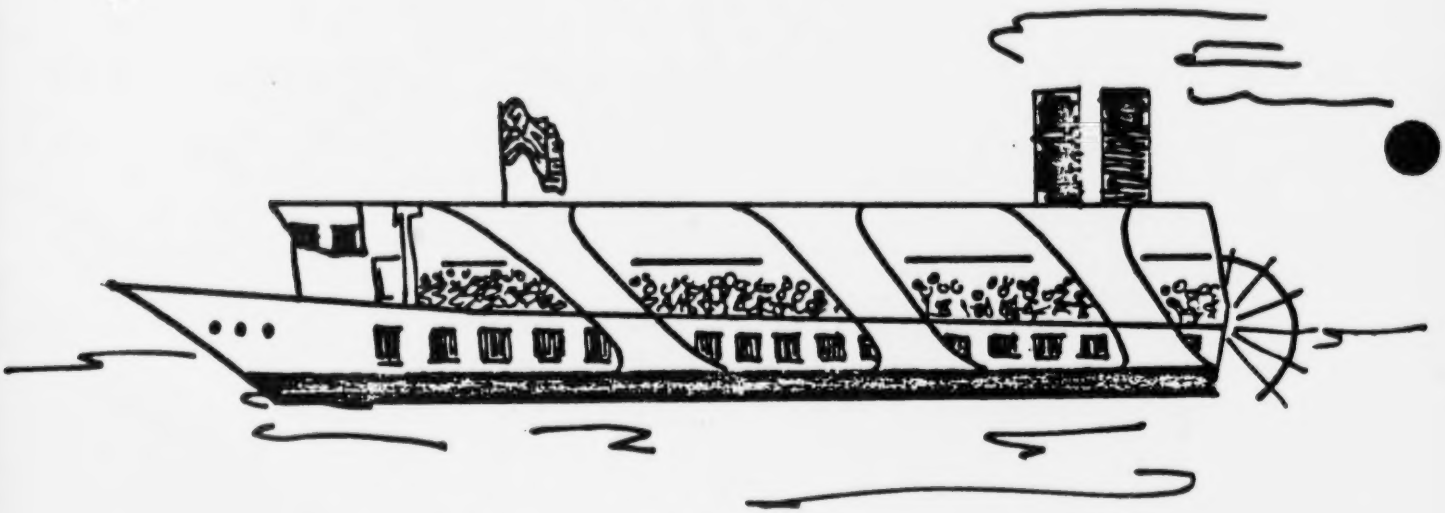
Immigration to Ukraine

When an invitation to settle in Southern Ukraine (on uninhabited although fertile lands) was extended to them by Catherine II of Tsarist Russia, they accepted. They settled at the junction of the Chortitza and Dnieper rivers near Zaporozhe under their leaders, Jakob Hoeppner and Johann Bartsch in 1788-89, and were joined by more families from the Danzig area in 1799. In spite of the incredible hardships in settling the region, villages were founded with thirty to forty families per village. The settlement came to be known as the "Old Colony." A second settlement in 1804 (160 Kilometres southeast of Chortitza), was called the "Molotschnaja." Land expansion, necessitated by large families, resulted in the founding of daughter colonies on large tracts of land bought by the mother colonies.

Immigration to Canada

When in 1870 the Tsarist Russian government introduced military conscription and exercised some control over schools, many Mennonites, especially from

the daughter colonies, chose to emigrate to Canada. Ottawa promised them total exemption from military service; fullest privileges to exercise their religious principles and educate their children in their own schools; a land grant of 160 acres to every person over twenty-one. Of the 18,000 Mennonites who emigrated in 1874-1876 about 10,000 went to the United States, while 8,000 came to Manitoba.



The S.S. International steamer brought the first contingent of Mennonites to Manitoba in 1874.

They settled on both sides of the Red River in villages structured according to the patterns laid out in Southern Ukraine. Their survival on the prairies during the harsh winters was in large part due to their long brick stoves which extended through the centres of the houses, warming all the rooms. The stoves were heated by burning straw or manure bricks. After suffering hardships and food shortages in the early years, the Manitoba Mennonites later became prosperous and contributed to the economic prosperity of Western Canada. Some fifty years later, however, they felt their way of life threatened by government assimilation policies.

1920s - Mennonites from Southern Ukraine.

When attendance in Manitoba public schools became mandatory in the 1920s, some 6,000 Mennonites left Canada for Mexico or Paraguay. Their homesteads were soon tenanted by a large number of persecuted Mennonites who arrived from the Soviet Union.

The new arrivals had suffered extreme hardship during the days of revolution and anarchy after 1917. Like the rest of the population, the Mennonites became the target for roving bandits under the anarchist leader Nestor Machno who murdered, raped, looted, pillaged, and

left ruin and destruction as well as the dreaded typhus epidemic in their wake. The total crop failure of Ukraine in 1921-1922 saw some 2.5 million people starve to death, including many Mennonites. Thousands of the latter eagerly grasped the opportunity to emigrate to Canada (a large portion to Manitoba) and escaped the tragic fate of those who were left behind.

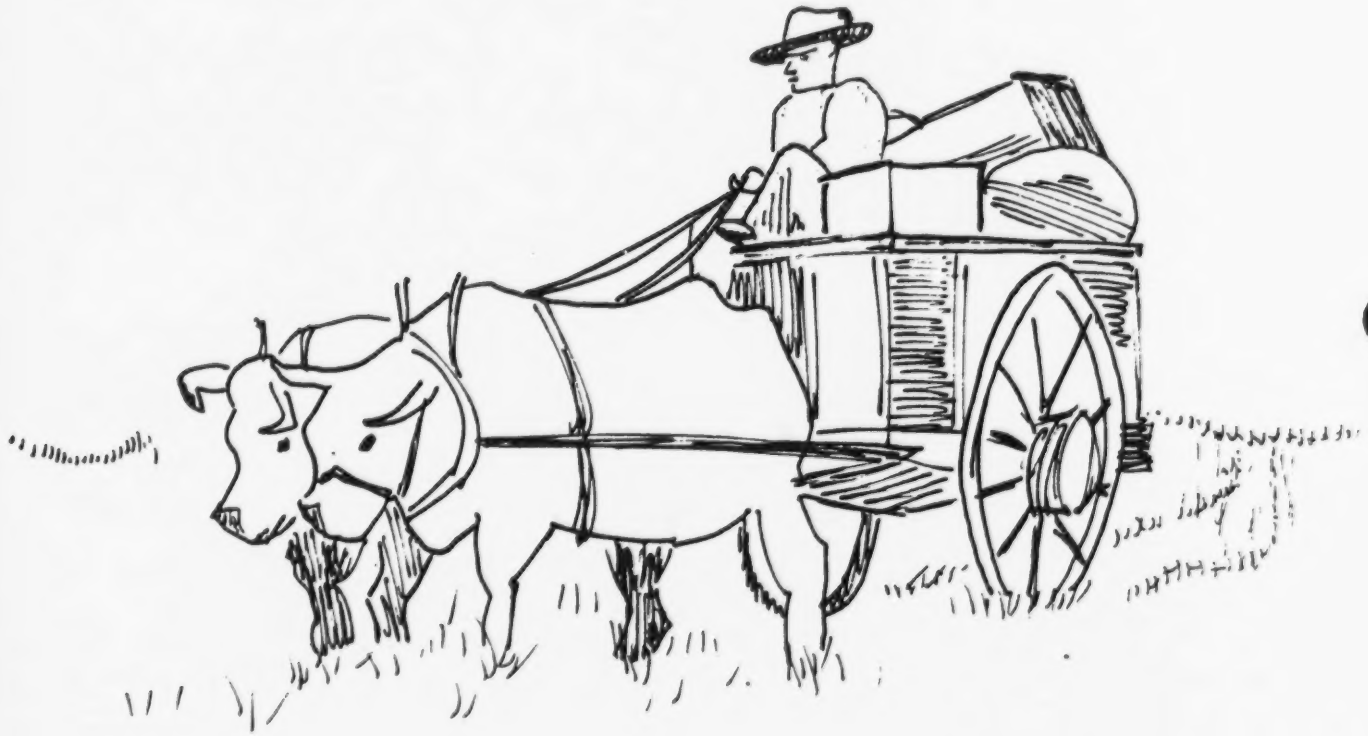
The battered newcomers were well-educated, eager to learn the English language and adopt the Canadian life style. Their coming resulted in an intellectual awakening among the earlier Canadian Mennonites of the West. Mennonite youth appeared in growing numbers in high schools and universities; newspapers were organized, books were published. Unfortunately the new immigrants had arrived just in time for the depression which struck Canada in 1929 as it did the rest of the world. On the whole the earlier Canadian Mennonites (descedents of the 1874 group) as well as the penniless new arrivals coped by reverting to an economy of self-sufficiency. They diversified their farming, raised vegetables, and worked as labourers. Many moved to the cities where Mennonite girls had become domestics in well-to-do homes. Their wages were sent home and saved many Mennonite farmers from bankruptcy. There are more Mennonites in the city of Winnipeg than in any other city of the world.

Post World War II Mennonite Immigration to Canada

The Mennonites who remained in Southern Ukraine after 1928 endured the ultimate suffering under Stalin's regime. 7,000,000 died during the artificial famine in Ukraine in 1932-1933, including many Mennonites. In 1941 when the Germans, who had occupied Ukraine during World War II, were forced to withdraw, thousands of Mennonites followed the retreating armies on the trek to the west. When Hitler's regime collapsed, the advancing Soviet armies ruthlessly sent back to the Soviet Union any of the refugees they could overtake, cruelly separating families and exiling them from their homes to outlying northern regions or labour camps. The numbers "repatriated" reached high levels because British and Americans delivered them to the Russians (Yalta Agreement) from their respectively occupied zones. Only 12,000 remained in the West who eventually, from 1947 on, emigrated to South America or Canada, many of them to Manitoba. The numbers were escalated by other European emigrees such as the Mennonites from the Danzig area in Prussia who joined the Russian Mennonite immigrants after World War II, their home territory having been annexed by Poland. In recent years a considerable number of Mennonites from Paraguay and Mexico (where they had emigrated in the 1920s) have returned to Manitoba. An almost negligible number from

the Soviet Union have been able to join their families in the last thirty some years.

Economically and culturally the Mennonites as a whole flourished in their new Canadian homeland to which they are fervently loyal.



The following section will deal with German-Canadians and the German language.

LANGUAGE

Upon completion of this section you will understand the bond between those who are able to understand and speak the German language.

Language is a strong binding force. The familiar sounds of their native language, in speech or song, brings security and comfort to people in strange and unfamiliar settings. Even strangers will communicate readily when they understand each other's words. People of the same language seek each other's company in homes, churches, clubs, shopping malls, restaurants, hospitals or senior citizens' homes. Shared customs, mutual friends, chilhood memories and familiar places become a welcome part of the conversation.

The familiarity of German is relaxing for those who grew up using the language. There is a feeling of understanding and acceptance when songs are sung, poems and stories read, or greetings conveyed. A few spoken phrases will bring a smile of recognition and often a readiness to communicate with attendants.

The prospect of letters, magazines or newspapers in the German language is an exciting part of any day. Mail

delivery means eagerly awaited news from relatives and friends in other parts of the country or abroad.

The written word provides contact with the past and present. Those with failing eyesight enjoy letters and articles read and re-read many times by someone who takes the time to provide this service.

The following section will describe the role religion plays in the lives of German-speaking Canadians.

RELIGION

Upon completion of this section you will be able to describe the role of religion and its importance in the lives of the German-speaking Canadian.

Most German-speaking Canadians have grown up practising some form of religion in their lives. Not all are extremely religious, but their choice of worship has influenced them to varying degrees. A number of Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran and Mennonite Churches in Manitoba continue to relate to German Canadians in their first language.

There is comfort in the familiar. For those who grew up speaking German, it continues to be the language of worship. A feeling of permanence and security is felt in the use of German for reading scriptures, singing hymn, speaking sermons and saying prayers.

A definite correlation exists between a person's faith and his or her peace and contentment. Bearing this in mind, it seems essential to respect and encourage each person's form of worship. At the same time, religion must be considered personal and private.

It is important to the German-speaking older adult to remain in touch with the church news and various church activities for as long as possible. Because of their years of experience and wisdom their help and advice should be sought whenever possible, giving them a sense of usefulness.

Many happy memories centre around the special events and holidays of the church. Sundays are enjoyable because they offer formal worship services, relaxation, visiting and often family gatherings. Even when memory begins to fade, there are pleasant thoughts and feelings associated with Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Easter, Lent, weddings, the sacrements, christenings, and other happenings in the church.

The following section will deal with the value of family ties to the German-Canadians.

FAMILY

Upon completion of this section you will be able to describe the value of family ties to the German-speaking Canadian.

Families provide the major source of love, understanding, and intimacy for German-speaking Canadians. Within the family, there is a place for voicing problems and receiving advice, for being encouraged as well as criticized, for tears or laughter.

Home in a German family is a warm, quiet place where the eldest male is head of the house. Although German families are patriarchial, female members are respected, and often consulted for advice and support. Rewards are not expected by the elders of a family, but respect is. Thus it is taken for granted that younger members of the family will be neat and well mannered when in the presence of their elders.

Harsh or crude language and boisterous actions are considered unacceptible. Young people, in turn, are loved and treated with patience and acceptance by the older adults. The continuity of the family line and the establishment of homes and families is important to the aging.

While German parents and grandparents do not appear overly demonstrative about their families, they do enjoy displaying pictures, mementos, drawings, hand made items, greeting cards and specific gifts from family members.

Family problems and emotions are rarely discussed outside of the family circle. Part of the dignity of German-speaking Canadians comes as a result of the determination to be independent, self-supporting citizens. One should not feel slighted if family secrets or personal problems are not related or shared. No insult is intended.

A warm welcome awaits visitors in a German-Canadian home. An invitation to relax over coffee and pastry is a sign of friendship and acceptance. The coffee will be strong and freshly brewed, and the conversation relaxing but stimulating.

The following section identifies some of the customs of German-speaking Canadians.

CUSTOMS

Upon completion of this section you will be able to describe many of the customs of German-speaking Canadians.

German-Canadian culture reflects the movement that has taken place within this group of people. Customs are as varied as the backgrounds are varied. These customs provide the unity as well as the differences within the culture.

Food is a necessity, but also provides and opportunity for socializing. The hunger and starvation experienced by many in past years makes every meal a special gift. This is obvious by the respect food and mealtime receive. Criticism and complaints are rarely voiced and food is seldom wasted.

Great care goes into the preparation of tasty, adventuresome and varied meals. Pride is taken in serving them with flair and elegance. German people expect that the dishes and cutlery will be spotless and that those who serve the meal are neat and well groomed.

Good manners play an important part in the enjoyment of a meal. A German table grace is spoken. The

hostess begins eating before the rest of the family and guests taste the food, and the host makes a toast before others sip the wine. The meal then continues in a relaxed, unhurried style.

Hearty soup and stew, fresh bread, pasta, cheese, fish, red meat, ground meat dishes, rhubarb, potatoes, cabbage, onions, gravy and sauces are favourite foods. German cooking is delicately seasoned with herbs and spices such as garlic, parsley, dill, paprika and rosemary and rarely requires additional seasoning.

The work ethic is a strong driving force for the new German-Canadian. There is a determination to succeed and be independent. For many of them this will not be the first home they have established. Their move to Canada was prompted by the desire for more freedom and greater opportunity. They are prepared to work hard! High standards are set by employers and employees for all levels of work. Pride is taken in being efficient, punctual, honest, fair achievers. Keen competition against themselves and others makes Germans aggresive workers.

Older adults have a wealth of wisdom and experience to contribute to the work force. They are encouraged to share the know-how they acquired in their active years. Teachers, pastors, writers, medical personnel, professionals, para-professionals, and trades people can offer insight, advice and service to jobs they are familiar with.

Retirement is that idyllic time when the pace of activity is slowed down but doesn't stop. Stimulated older adults carry on creative and useful projects like writing, reading, woodworking, sewing, baking, crafts, hobbies and volunteering.

Play is entered into as seriously as work. Recreational and socializing activities include the common courtesies of formal introductions, strict regard for rules and time schedules, fairness in competition and couteous behaviour.

Physical activities enjoyed are ball games, tennis, boating, hiking, skiing and walking. Group activities are a part of socializing and are often carried out as part of a club or organization. Church groups, musical groups, drama clubs, cultural festivals, sports clubs and similar recreational organizations afford opportunities to participate in various activities.

Older adults will join in a game or activity, but often prefer being spectators. This is especially true if children and grandchildren are involved in the game. Some games they might join in more readily are games of challenge and concentration such as chess, checkers. or dominoes. Other recreational pastimes might include reading, singing, listening to tapes and records, attending concerts and dramas, collecting stamps, heirlooms, photography, travelling and dining.

Much of the play and recreation takes place at times of special gatherings and holidays. The older adults join in the preparations of planning, decorating, and preparing for these events. The gathering of family and friends brings comfort and joy to lonely older individuals.

The following section will consider the relationships of the German-Canadian family to the neighbourhood and community in which it lives.

COMMUNITY COHESIVENESS

Upon completion of this section you will be able to describe a German-Canadian family's relationship to their neighbourhood and community.

The home and surrounding neighbourhood of the German-Canadian provide the setting for many intergenerational family activities. The love of family life creates a special attachment to the home, where so much time has been spent.

One contribution German-speaking Canadians offer to the community is the maintaining of an attractive home. Neat, dignified, quiet, might be the best way to describe the appearance of house and yard. Another special interest is their regard for quality of life. This makes them eager participants in community upgrading and any projects that encourage family and community cohesiveness.

Young adults and older adults are extremely conscious of human rights and dignity issues. They recognize the value of education and social training, and take a keen interest in schools and community services. The biggest barriers to involvement are

language and custom differences. When these are understood, there is positive interaction. There is a willingness to become a vital part of the communtiy where they live.

SUMMARY

The historical section of this module has informed the reader of the rich and varied background of German-speaking Canadians. The intention of the brief history is to provide a basis for understanding the differences and similarities of the older adults in Canada. Appreciating the culture of a group can help the formation of more knowledgeable relationships. In the case of the older adults and the workers, it can assure more sensitive care.

The second section of this module deals with culturally specific topics relating to German-speaking Canadian older adults. The relationship between the older adults and language, religion, family, customs and community cohesiveness was considered. Familiarization with these cultural traditions should provide insight into the accepted norms and practices of the German cultural group. Both the older adults and the caregivers should benefit from this information.

AUF WIEDERSEHEN

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Additional Resources

Place: National Film Board of Canada
245 Main St.
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 1A7

Plain People

Filmed in the Mennonite community near Elmira, Ontario, this film portrait looks at an industrious people who live now much as they lived in the 1700s when they emigrated from Europe to Pennsylvania, and later to Ontario. The program provides a lattice-work of Mennonite history and philosophy, upon which it builds a rich visual portrait of contemporary Mennonite life.

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27 minutes:40 seconds 106C 0176 222

Waterloo Farmers

This film juxtaposes Old Order Mennonites and New Order Mennonites. Their differing beliefs are reflected in their methods of farming. One has not changed in 400 years; the other is up-to-date and mechanized. The film asks whether a compromise will eventually have to be reached between the two. (Award:Santarem.)

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27 minutes:43 seconds 106C 0176 103

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ELDERLY SERVICE WORKERS' TRAINING PROJECT (ESWTP)

TITLES OF THE TRAINING PROJECT'S MODULES

Block A: Basic Knowledge of Aging Process

A.1 Program Planning for Older Adults **
A.2 Stereotypes of Aging **
A.3 Human Development Aspects of Aging **
A.4 Social Aspects of Aging **
A.5 Physiological Aspects of Aging **
A.6 Death and Bereavement **
A.7 Psychological Aspects of Aging **
A.8 Confusion and the Older Adult **
A.9 Nutrition and the Older Adult **
A.10 Listening and the Older Adult **

Block B: Cultural Gerontology

B.1 Ukrainian Culture **
B.1.1 Communication and Adjustment *
B.1.2 Communication and Adjustment *

B.2 German Culture **
B.2.1 Communication and Adjustment *

B.3 French Culture *
B.3.1 Communication and Adjustment *

B.4 Native Culture *
B.4.1 Communication and Adjustment *
B.4.2 Communication and Adjustment *

Block C: Work Environment

C.1 Work Environment I *

Resource Materials:

Handbook of Selected Case Studies
User's Guide
ESWTP Authoring System
ESWTP Final Report

Please Note:

ALL MODULES ARE AVAILABLE IN THE PRINT FORMAT. THE CODE FOR IDENTIFYING OTHER FORMATS IS LISTED BELOW.

Code	Format
*	Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI) Courseware
**	Interactive Video (Tape)/Computer-Assisted Television Courseware